

Day 8 - Daniel Chazen

It's absolutely amazing how much power branded dealers have in the contemporary art market. They have significant influence and control over many artists, the value of their works, customers, and almost everything in between. They are like the superstar agents for professional athletes, except they get a much larger commission and have more control over their clients. After reading Thompson's analysis of the role of the dealer, I think they may often have more power in the contemporary art market than the artists they represent. It's not surprising that Don Thompson is a professor of marketing, as the more I read for this course, the more I think that the art market is mostly about marketing and public relations.

I have chosen to write about Marian Goodman of New York, whose gallery features Gerhard Richter and Jeff Wall. The goal of her first gallery, which opened in 1977, was to "establish a vital dialogue among artists and institutions working internationally." Her gallery is all about the front room. Goodman seems to stay away from the business aspects of being an art dealer. She never sells works that her artists haven't made. She is known for being more concerned about showing art, rather than about selling it. This is unlike Gagosian, who seems to be very caught up in the monetary and hype aspects of the contemporary art market. While she is not the same level of branded dealer that Gagosian is, she definitely has a strong loyalty and integrity with the artists she represents and the clients of her gallery.

Here is a picture of Goodman:



Even though she is almost always referred to as a dealer, she does not like the term and would rather be called a "gallerist," as she says a "gallerist represents artists, and a dealer represents a work" (Thompson, 29). (Personally, I think that is a marketing technique in and of itself as there is no big difference between the two.) She represents many famous artists who have been featured in top museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and MoMA in New York. One art critic called Goodman "the most respected contemporary dealer in New York, for her tastes, standards, and loyalty to her artists. Goodman believes that dealers should commit to working with an artist for 15-20 years. She is very loyal to the artists she works with; she's been with some of them for 25+ years. I think it is this loyalty that makes her so successful.

She does not seem to be one of the art dealers who frequently loses their artists and her status as a "branded dealer" definitely creates value, what Thompson refers to as "brand equity" (Thompson 13). Branding for the artist and the dealer is key with contemporary art – not only for the dealer and the artist, but just as important for the customer who gets a "validation" of taste, "class," and "reinforcement of aesthetic judgment." (Thompson, 14). With contemporary art, where there is "no standard formula for determining what an artist is worth," having a branded dealer who can "set the market" is key (Crow, 4).

Given the enormous power these dealers have, I wonder if there needs to be some kind of legal regulations put in place in the art market, such as a limit on the dealer's commission. It would be hard to do. But even if it could be done, it may actually hurt the market. It's hard to say if regulating dealers is a good or bad thing.

What do you think?

Goodman currently has a gallery in New York City and Paris. Here is the link to the gallery's website:

<http://www.mariangoodman.com/>

Here are links to newspaper articles written about her:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/11/20/marian-goodman-the-accidental-art-mogul.html>

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/02/02/040202fa_fact_schjeldahl?currentPage=all

http://www.wmagazine.com/artdesign/2007/11/marian_goodman

Here is a video of the Gerhard Richter exhibit at her gallery in New York: